



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 167

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021

No. 53

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 11 a.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who laid the foundations of the Earth, we worship You.

Lord, walk with our lawmakers throughout this day, inspiring them to submit to Your will. May they treasure Your instructions. May these instructions enable them to tune their ears to Your wisdom and concentrate on understanding Your precepts.

Give our Senators a hunger and thirst for Your knowledge as they strive to keep America strong. Lord, help them to remember that You give the treasure of good sense to the godly.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on Thursday, the Biden administration officials had their first person-to-person meeting with representatives from the People's Republic of China. By diplomatic standards, the opening public exchange was tense. The belligerent grandstanding by PRC diplomats was, unfortunately, no surprise. It is what we have come to expect.

As China's military and economic might have grown, Beijing has found that the bullying tactics that people call their "wolf warrior" diplomatic strategy have often worked out for them. So I was glad the U.S. team used the opportunity to cut through the CCP's spin and tell some plain truths about China's regional bullying and disrespect for the rule of law, whether in Hong Kong or Tibet.

I am also glad the administration has sent U.S. personnel to join other diplomats in Beijing to protest the secret trial of Canadian citizen Michael Kovrig.

But like I said last week, calling out China rhetorically is just the first step. An effective U.S. strategy will require more than just tough talk and symbolism.

The PRC poses all matter of threats to the United States and to the free world. They want to control crucial sea lanes in the South China Sea. They

want to expand their capabilities to menace other countries' forces, including ours, with increasingly accurate long-range weapons. They want to rewrite the rules of the international system to suit their interests instead of ours and our friends.

These are hard and real challenges. Facing them down will require strength and resolve from the United States and from our partners. So like I said last week, if the administration is serious about staying tough on China and strengthening our hand, they will have support among Senate Republicans.

But any such serious strategy will need to start with maintaining and building up the backbone of our hard power—the competitive edge of the U.S. military. To defend America, defend America's interests, and deter adversaries, we need to sustain our military edge. And to sustain our edge, we need to modernize our forces and maintain our capability to project power.

Defense spending is the single most important policy lever available to us in our competition with China. The President's budget submission will tell Beijing a lot about whether the Biden administration intends to back up tough talk with actual strength.

Finally, whatever Congress may do to step up our game on China, it will be essential that it be bipartisan. The legislative components of national security should not swing wildly every time the gavels change hands.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S1661